AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 23, as follows:

Where the system comprises a plurality of the modules, or agents, then the availability of a service may be indicated by the SLAs of and between the agents which will be required in provision of the service. The agents may then have a "peer to peer" relationship in which the status of all the agents is substantially equal in a team of agents brought together for the ~~purose~~ purpose of providing a service. Alternatively, there can be advantages in the agents having a hierarchical relationship in which a primary agent may have availability data for a group of "subordinate" agents. That is, the primary agent may have stored an SLA indicative of its own capability to provide a service, which SLA is determined by a predetermined set of other SLAs, these being the SLAs of the subordinate agents.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 14, as follows:

Services are associated with one or more agents which are responsible for managing and executing them. Each service is managed by one agent, although it may involve execution of sub-services by a number of other agents. Since agents are autonomous there ~~are~~ have no control dependencies between them: therefore, if an agent requires a service which is managed by another agent it cannot simply instruct it to start the service. Rather, the agents must come to a mutually acceptable agreement about the terms and conditions under which the desired service will be performed. Such contracts

are called service level agreements SLAs. The mechanism for making SLAs is negotiation - a joint decision making process in which the parties verbalise their (possibly contradictory) demands and then move towards agreement by a process of concession or search for new alternatives. This mechanism is described in "Negotiation Principles" by H J Mueller (1996) in Foundations of Distributed Artificial Intelligence, published by Wiley Interscience and edited by O'Hara and Jennings.